

MECAC November 28, 2007

Members: Cindy O'Dell, Libby Hancock, Sandra Morris, Sheilah Mevis, Carrie Leu, Mary Jane Standaert, Kelly Rosenleaf, Shelly Meyer, Connie Sturgis, Barb Perzinski, Ann Tribby, Terry Minow, Becky Fleming-Siebenaler, Alma Young, Dale Mahugh, Terilynn O'Connell, Darlene Miller, Jeanne Christopher, Viola Wood, Susan Carlson.

Guests: Hank Hudson, Ann Klaus, Patti Russ, Anne Mitchell(facilitator), Mary Rudolph, Christy Hill-Larson, Jane Schumaker, Teresa DeStephano, DeeAnn Hartman, Anne Carpenter

Public: Patti Russ, Robert Fox, Becky Fox, Melissa Case

Staff: Jamie Palagi, Chris Hettinger, Sally Mueller, Melody Olson, Angi Rayfield, Lisa Murphy, Linda Kjorstad, Chauntel Lucier, Renne't Sarbu.

Chairperson Cindy O'Dell opened the meeting by welcoming everyone.

Anne Mitchell introduced herself and reviewed the agenda for the day, including information on childcare and quality initiatives in other states and Montana. She facilitated introductions.

Discussion of Current Quality Programs

Jamie Palagi of the ECSB presented an overview of current Quality programs in the State of Montana. These programs include:

- Star Quality – tiered reimbursement - \$229,500
- Career Development - \$370,000
- Infant Toddler Certification and Merit Pay - \$55,000
- Certified infant/toddler caregiver program - \$86,400
- Mini-grants – regular and I/T - \$180,000
- Provider grants – planning, expanding cc, accreditation, slots - \$222,000
- Merit Pay – Higher Ed, Merit Pay 1 with 2 tracks - \$152,000
- Specialized Training Grants - \$75,000
- Mentor programs - \$126,000
- Higher Education – course work - \$140,000
- Apprenticeship Program - \$0
- CCR&R Community Service - \$122,295
- Consumer Ed - \$50,000
- CCR&R After School Earmark - \$101,000
- Map to Inclusive CC - \$86,000
- Printing and Publication - \$15,000

Jamie P noted how much was spent for all programs for the entire year. Other quality initiatives, not included in the above list, are childcare resource and referral Community service funds, CCR&R earmarks, map to inclusive child care funds, and printing costs for Best Beginnings Quality Initiatives.

Quality Rating Improvement System – Anne Mitchell provided an overview of QRIS. The goal of a QRIS is to tie all parts of state childcare programs to the system, to provide incentives and to the public market. Child care is a market that includes federal, state and private investment. Programs are required to participate in the system. Early intervention programs should be included in the QRIS. Tax credits can be tied to QRIS. Pennsylvania was cited as one example of a comprehensive QRIS. That system provides a payment for all children, while encouraging inclusion of subsidized children and a link to the quality rating.

Early care and education is a market. Providers offer services for a price; consumers choose among them and pay; public pays for some low-income children. ECE is a special market sector that serves both public and private needs. QRIS is ECE market intervention. As this intervention is designed, concepts to keep in mind are quality assurance, and both supply side interventions and demand side interventions. Family, friend & neighbor care is not part of a QRIS system but should also be supported.

There was a discussion regarding how we might apply this model to Montana. Susan Carlson brought up concerns regarding the federal loan forgiveness program's exclusion of management staff in Head Start.

Public comment: Melissa C talked about why K-12 was so well funded. Comments were made that kindergarten teachers are our biggest supporters.

After Anne Mitchell's presentation, the council discussed how to group current quality programs into the categories of 1) quality assurance, 2) supply-side and 3) demand side interventions.

In the Quality Assurance Area these programs are included:

Mini Grants; Provider Grants; Infant/Toddler Certification; Infant/Toddler Merit Pay; and Specialized Training Grants.

In the Supply-side intervention category, these programs are included:

Mentoring; Career Development; Higher Education; Apprenticeship; Higher Education Merit Pay; Merit Pay 1; and R&R Agencies

In the Demand-side intervention category, this program is included:

Star Quality

The council broke into groups and discussed programs in each of the categories (QA, supply, demand) to identify whether the programs are helping and improving care in MT. For each program, the small group considered the following questions:

Is this working?

How do we know it is improving quality?

What would make it more effective (at improving quality)?

Report on Touchpoints: Cindy O'Dell did a presentation on the Touchpoints program.

Touchpoints is a child development/family support model developed by Dr. T. Barry Brazelton. Touchpoints is a program that helps the childcare staff and parents to understand the development of the children in their care.

Touchpoints has three goals for each child and their family: optimal child development, healthy functional families and competent and healthy professionals.

Anne Mitchell provided a summary of the day and gave the group a preview of Thursday's agenda. She invited feedback from the group and received positive comments about the process and the progress the group had made.

Public Comment: The process is going well and the group is making good progress.

MECAC 11-29-07 Council meeting

Anne Mitchell welcomed the group, reviewed the agenda for the day and informed the group that the majority of the day would be spend in small groups working to develop recommendations for ECSB program promoting quality child care.

Those present self-selected into the following groups: 1) supply-side section/practitioners; 2) the supply-side section/programs; 3) QRIS standard; and 4) demand-side.

The groups discussed each current program, asking do we need this, can this be simplified, how does it need to change to contribute to measurable quality improvement, and how will it be aligned with the levels on the QRIS?

Each group reported the highlights of their discussion to the large group.

Small groups reconvened to discuss how practitioners are engaged and supported, is the system easy to understand and navigate and accessible for them, how much will it cost, how will we know it's working and moving toward the outcomes (what data will we need), and what else do we need to answer these questions? The groups then reported back and then developed action plans.

Jamie noted that ECSB staff will use the bureau's strategic planning meeting to synthesize notes into a draft QRIS framework. This draft will be sent out to MECAC members for comment. Comments will be due by the 18th of January and presented at the January MECAC meeting. The goal is to have dollar amounts assigned to proposals by the end of the next MECAC meeting. The next meeting will include follow-up work in these small groups as well as the regular MECAC format. Quality dollars may stay the same until 2010.

Kelly Rosenleaf made a case for encouraging five levels in the QRIS system, because the public is used to five star rating systems, making public education easier when the new system is unveiled.

Anne Mitchell complimented the group on the work that was accomplished and led a discussion regarding how to communicate meeting results to the public.

The group developed the following statements to communicate the intention in designing a new quality system:

The intent is to develop a unified, comprehensive system that provides providers and families a "friendly" path to quality improvement in child care by connecting programs, ensuring easy access and increasing support.

Jamie thanked everyone who participated for their hard work.

At the next meeting, Dale Mahugh will take over chairman of the council. There will be elections to vote for a new vice chair. New appointment letters will be sent out in January as there are some members who are going off the council.

Next meeting will be January 23rd & 24th, 2008 at the Board of Investments Building/Colonial Building on the 2nd floor Wilderness Room.